

Baker's Trial Opens Monday

By Dick Barnes

Associated Press

Bobby Baker, who built a fortune while he worked as secretary to the Senate's Democratic majority, goes to trial here Monday on charges of tax evasion, theft and conspiracy.

The trial may not have the sexy overtones of earlier Baker controversy, but possible consequences of conviction—48 years in prison and \$47,000 in fines—are far greater than the denunciation the Senate Rules Committee gave him in 1965.

The trial in U.S. District Court could also provide fuel

for renewed political controversy.

Guesses on the length of the Baker trial run to three months. The prosecution estimates a minimum of three weeks to present its case against the 38-year-old one-time confidant of many Democratic senators, including the then Majority Leader, Lyndon B. Johnson.

Baker was indicted a year ago by a Federal grand jury after a 15-month investigation. He has pleaded innocent.

Selection of 12 jurors and six alternates is the expected first order of business in the proceedings before District

Judge Oliver Gasch. So far, no new motion to delay the trial has been filed.

Government Prosecutor William O. Bittman, fearing a delay motion if his plan of attack is publicized in advance, declines to say how many witnesses he will call or to go into other details of prosecution tactics.

He did speculate that it would take three or four weeks to present his case, adding, "Obviously I don't know the length of the cross-examination."

Baker came to the Senate as a knickers-wearing 14-year-old page boy from Pickens, S.C. He became majority secretary in 1955 and served in this important behind-the-scenes post until October, 1963, when he resigned under fire. He is charged with:

- Filing false income-tax returns for 1961 and 1962, understating his income by \$54,558.91 and evading more than \$23,000 in taxes for those years.

- Committing felonious theft by accepting \$67,000 from two officials of Los Angeles savings and loan associations, and omitting substantial portions of the amounts from his tax returns.

- Obtaining \$33,000 by

fraud from another savings and loan man, transporting it by interstate commerce and failing to report a substantial part of it.

- Conspiring with associate Wayne L. Bromley and former Lt. Gov. Clifford Jones of Nevada to conceal the nature, purpose and intended recipient of payments made by five companies seemingly to Bromley but actually to Baker.

A controversial element in the latest round of the Baker case is the Government's admitted electronic eavesdropping of some Baker conversations.

The FBI said he conversations were picked up incidental to a general surveillance of organized crime. The Justice Department said the Baker indictment is not based on any information gleaned from the bugging.

After a pretrial hearing late last year which centered around the bugging, Judge Gasch refused to throw out the indictment but he barred from evidence any recorded conversation between Baker and any person who cannot be identified.

[Gasch also rejected an attempt by defense counsel Edward Bennett Williams to have the case divided into three separate trials.]